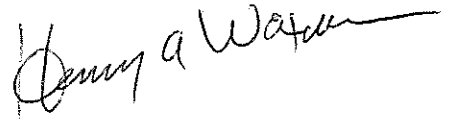


Rep. Henry A. Waxman  
H.Res. 1751  
December 7, 2010



Madam Speaker. It is with a heavy heart that I join my colleagues in mourning the devastating losses Israel suffered in the Carmel fire. It is a human tragedy and an environmental tragedy.

As we pay tribute to those who gave their lives in an effort to save others, we can at least find comfort in the wave of international support and assistance that enabled Israel to extinguish the massive fire within days. The United State is proud to have played a leading role in these efforts by procuring and delivering the massive quantities of firefighting materials that were used in multiple sorties over the affected areas.

We rallied to Israel's side because she is a close ally and friend. And so many other countries eagerly responded as well because, quite frankly – Israel is among the first to offer aid when others are in need.

After earthquakes in Haiti, Chile, Colombia, Turkey, China, Pakistan and Iran, Israelis were among the first to join the rescue missions or send supplies. They have helped Cyprus and Greece in battling forest fires and provided aid in the aftermath of Central American floods, Asian typhoons, and the tragic 2004 tsunami. An Israeli team arrived in Louisiana shortly after our own Hurricane Katrina.

Sadly, one casualty of the Carmel fire is Yemin Orde, a youth village founded in 1953 to accommodate orphans who immigrated to Israel after the Holocaust. Today, the campus is home to more than 500 children from age 9-19 that have been resettled from Russia, Ethiopia, and elsewhere where they lived in orphanages, had no family to care for them, or experienced traumatic life events. While the children and staff were safely evacuated as the fire broke out, more than 40% of the village's facilities were destroyed by the flames and many children had to relive the trauma of being suddenly uprooted from their familiar world. I have been to Yemin Orde. I share their sorrow and their conviction to ensure that these vulnerable children and the school's vital mission continue to be cared for now and in the future.

U.S. teams are already on the ground working with Israeli experts to stabilize the area and make sure that the forest can be successfully replanted. Today, communities across the United States are mobilizing through the Jewish National Fund and other organizations to help Israel preserve, replant and restore. The blue box of the JNF was a permanent feature in my parents' home, collecting coins to plant trees in the budding state of Israel and its mission continues in earnest. With partnership and determination we can look forward to a day when the Carmel forest will flourish again.

As Israelis survey the devastation in Carmel, they can take solace that they were not alone at a time of crisis and that they will not be alone in the rebuilding effort.